

State of New York
Department of Correctional Services

Building Number 2
Harriman Office Campus
Albany, New York 12226

INMATE SUICIDE REPORT

2000-2009



David A. Paterson
Governor



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Total Suicides

- A total of 121 inmates committed suicide within DOCS facilities during the ten-year period of 2000 through 2009.

Suicide Rate per 100,000 Inmates

- The overall suicide rate for the inmate population for the study period was 18.6 per 100,000 per year.

Age

- Overall, the age of suicide victims generally mirrored the age of all inmates, except inmates under 35 years of age tended to pose a lower suicide risk.

Race/Ethnic Status

- White inmates were considerably more likely than inmates of other race/ethnic backgrounds to commit suicide.

Commitment Crime

- Violent felons were more likely to commit suicide and drug offenders less likely.

Region of the State

- Inmates from upstate counties without an urban center had the highest suicide rate.

Minimum and Maximum Sentences

- The longer an inmate's minimum or maximum sentence, the greater the possibility that the inmate was a suicide victim.

Time Served

- The largest percentage of suicides occurred among inmates who had served less than one year of incarceration since their latest admission to NYS DOCS.

Time Served in Current Facility

- Among suicide deaths, there was a substantially higher concentration of offenders who had recently transferred to a new correctional facility.

Housing Location

- The largest percentage of suicides (42%) occurred in general confinement, followed by Special Housing Unit (27%), and reception facilities (15%).

OMH Level

- Suicide was more concentrated among inmates with Office of Mental Health Service (OMH) Level 1 and 2 designations. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the suicide victims were designated as OMH Level 1 or 2, which constituted 5% of the overall inmate population.

INTRODUCTION

This report examines characteristics of 121 inmates who committed suicide in a Department of Correctional Services' facility during the years 2000-2009. Selected demographic and legal history variables are profiled and comparisons are made between decedents and the inmate population at the mid-point of the ten year report period (December 31, 2004).

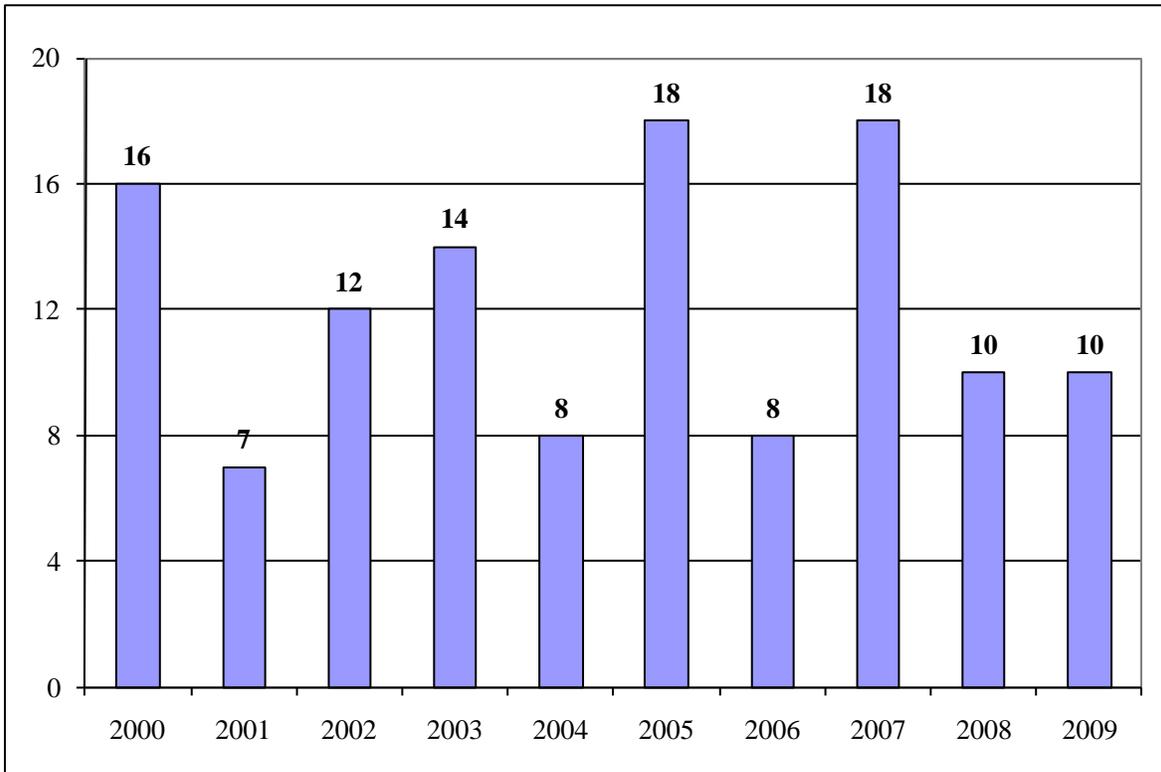
In addition to presenting aggregate data for the total ten year period, annual data is provided for numerous characteristics for the most recent three years, 2007 – 2009.

Suicides of inmates who were on temporary release status or who were being housed in local jails due to court appearances are not included in this report. In addition, suicides of escapees, absconders and parolees at the Willard drug treatment facility, that is jointly administered by the Division of Parole and DOCS, are not included. This report focuses on suicides of inmates that occurred within DOCS facilities.

Annual Number of Suicide Deaths

There was considerable fluctuation in the number of suicides annually over the 10 years from calendar year 2000 through 2009. The number of suicide deaths ranged from a low of 7 (in 2001) to a high of 18 that occurred in both 2005 and 2007.

Chart 1. Annual Number of Suicides New York State DOCS
2000 - 2009



Ten Year Annual Rate of Suicide Deaths

The annual rate of suicide deaths ranged from a low of 10.1 per 100,000 inmates in 2001 to a high of 28.4 per 100,000 in 2005. The average number of suicides per year, over the period 2000 through 2009, was 12.1 and the annual rate over this period was 18.6 per 100,000 inmates.

According to the most recently published national data¹, the suicide rate in state prisons throughout the country averaged 16 per 100,000 from 2001 to 2006. In New York State DOCS from 2001 through 2006, the suicide rate was just under 17 per 100,000.

Table 1. Annual Count of Inmate Suicide Incidents in Facilities
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 - 2009

Year	Average Daily Population	Suicides In Facility	Suicide Rate per 100,000	Average daily population	
				2000-2004	2005-2009
2000	71,172	16	22.5	2000-2004	2005-2009
2001	69,157	7	10.1	67,631	62,275
2002	67,117	12	17.9	Total suicides	
2003	66,050	14	21.2	2000-2004	2005-2009
2004	64,659	8	12.4	57	64
2005	63,357	18	28.4	Suicide rate per 100,000	
2006	63,318	8	12.6	2000-2004	2005-2009
2007	63,507	18	28.3	16.9	20.6
2008	61,724	10	16.2	Average suicides per year	
2009	59,471	10	16.8	2000-2004	2005-2009
Average	64,953	12.1	18.6	11.4	12.8

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (DCRP)", Deaths in Custody Statistical Tables, Table 13. Mortality rate per 100,000 State prisoners, by cause of death, 2001-2006, by Christopher J. Mumola, BJS Policy Analyst and Margaret E. Noonan, BJS. see: <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=2093>

Correctional Facility

During the study period, 87% of the suicides occurred in maximum security facilities and 13% occurred in medium security facilities.

Elmira Correctional Facility, including Reception, had the most suicides during the ten years of the study period with 20, followed by Clinton with 17.

Table 2. Inmate Suicides by Facility by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009

Facility/Security*	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total
Maximum Security						
Attica	9	0	0	1	1	10
Attica ICP	0	1	0	1	2	2
Auburn	6	0	0	0	0	6
Bedford-Female	3	1	0	0	1	4
Clinton	11	1	1	2	4	15
Clinton ICP	2	0	0	0	0	2
Coxsackie	3	1	0	0	1	4
Downstate Reception	4	3	1	0	4	8
Eastern	1	1	1	0	2	3
Elmira	8	1	1	1	3	11
Elmira Reception	7	1	0	1	2	9
Five Points	2	0	0	0	0	2
Green Haven	1	1	0	0	1	2
Great Meadow	3	0	3	1	4	7
Sing Sing	2	0	0	0	0	2
Southport	4	0	1	1	2	6
Sullivan	1	0	1	0	1	2
Upstate SHU	1	0	0	0	0	1
Upstate Single Cell	1	0	0	0	0	1
Wende	3	1	0	0	1	4
Wende Reception	1	0	0	0	0	1
Fishkill SHU200	0	0	0	1	1	1
Midstate SHU200	0	0	0	1	1	1
Lakeview SHU200	0	0	1	0	1	1
Subtotal	73	12	10	10	32	105
	88%	67%	100%	100%	84%	87%
Medium Security						
Albion-Female	2	0	0	0	0	2
Arthur Kill	1	0	0	0	0	1
Bare Hill	1	1	0	0	1	2
Chateaugay RPV	0	1	0	0	1	1
Fishkill	3	1	0	0	1	4
Midstate	0	2	0	0	2	2
Oneida	0	1	0	0	1	1
Riverview	1	0	0	0	0	1
Woodbourne	2	0	0	0	0	2
Subtotal	10	6	0	0	6	16
	12%	33%	0%	0%	16%	13%
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Only includes facilities where a suicide occurred from 2000 to 2009.

SHU-Special housing unit, SHU200 200 bed maximum security special housing unit at a medium security facility, RPV-return parole violator program, ICP-intermediate care program.

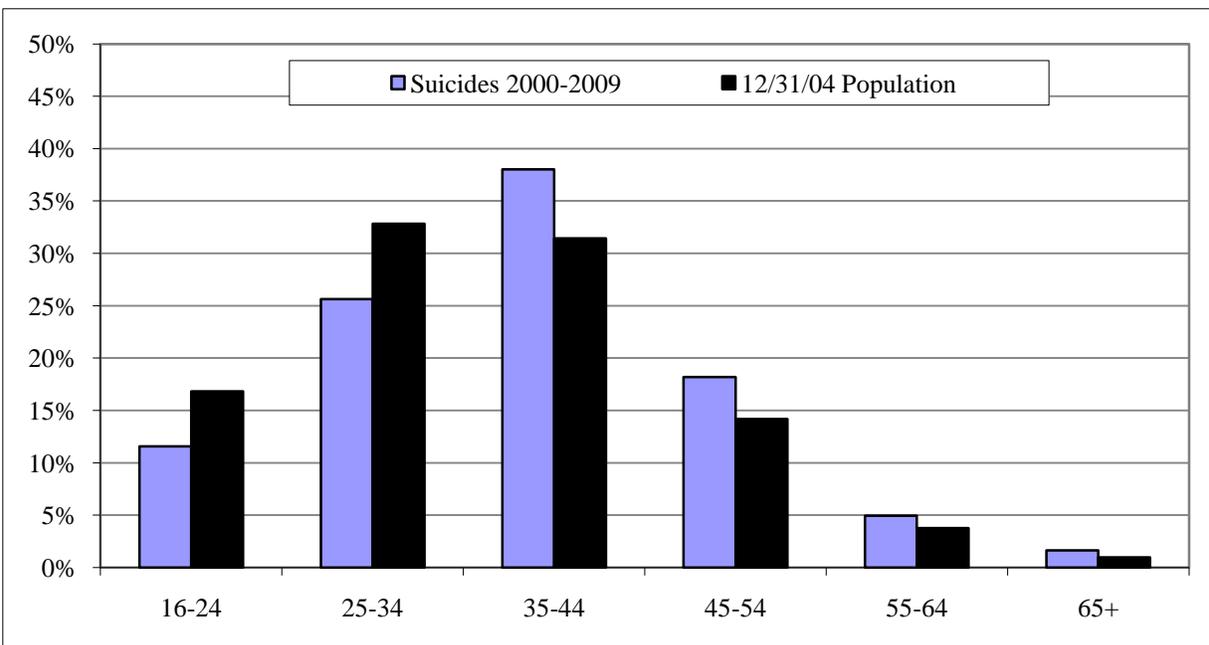
Age of Inmates

The age of suicide victims generally mirrored the age of all inmates in DOCS on December 31, 2004. Inmates younger than 35 years old, however, were less likely to have been suicide victims.

**Table 3. Age of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009**

Age	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total 2000-2009	12/31/04 Population
16-24	8	3	1	2	6	14	10,707
25-34	21	6	4	0	10	31	20,905
35-44	36	2	4	4	10	46	20,029
45-54	11	7	1	3	11	22	9,036
55-64	5	0	0	1	1	6	2,396
65+	2	0	0	0	0	2	625
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,698
Average Age	39.0	36.7	35.6	40.4	37.3	38.5	34.9
Percent							
16-24	10%	17%	10%	20%	16%	12%	17%
25-34	25%	33%	40%	0%	26%	26%	33%
35-44	43%	11%	40%	40%	26%	38%	31%
45-54	13%	39%	10%	30%	29%	18%	14%
55-64	6%	0%	0%	10%	3%	5%	4%
65+	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 3. Age of Inmate at Time of Death



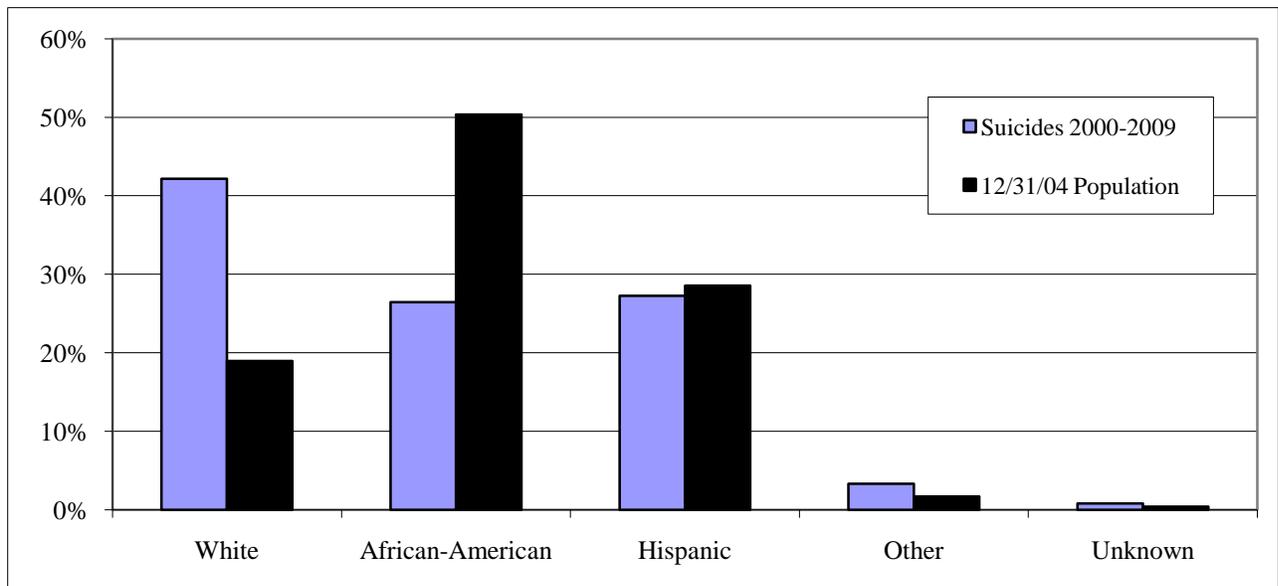
Race/Ethnic Status

White inmates were considerably more likely than inmates of other race/ethnic backgrounds to commit suicide. White inmates made up 42% of suicides for the ten year study period, but only 19% of inmates under custody at the end of 2004. African-American inmates were under-represented among suicides: 26% of suicides vs. 50% of the population. Hispanic inmates constituted roughly the same proportion of suicides as they were of the overall inmate population (27% of suicides vs. 29% of the population).

**Table 4. Race/Ethnicity of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009**

Race/Ethnic Status	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total 2000-2009	12/31/04 Population
White	38	6	3	4	13	51	12,088
African-American	20	7	2	3	12	32	32,097
Hispanic	22	5	4	2	11	33	18,201
Other	2	0	1	1	2	4	1,102
Unknown	1	0	0	0	0	1	210
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,698
Percent							
White	46%	33%	30%	40%	34%	42%	19%
African-American	24%	39%	20%	30%	32%	26%	50%
Hispanic	27%	28%	40%	20%	29%	27%	29%
Other	2%	0%	10%	10%	5%	3%	2%
Unknown	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 4. Race/Ethnicity of Inmate



Commitment Crime

Compared to their representation in the overall under custody population of December 31, 2004, violent felons (particularly inmates committed for homicide and sex crimes) appear to have been more likely to commit suicide and drug offenders less likely to commit suicide.

Table 5. Crime Category of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009

Commitment Crime	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total 2000-2009	12/31/04 Population
Violent Felony	65	13	9	8	30	95	36,218
Other Coercive	3	2	1	0	3	6	4,462
Drug Offenses	7	0	0	1	1	8	15,491
Property and Other	8	3	0	1	4	12	7,527
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,698
Percent							
Violent Felony	78%	72%	90%	80%	79%	79%	57%
Other Coercive	4%	11%	10%	0%	8%	5%	7%
Drug Offenses	8%	0%	0%	10%	3%	7%	24%
Property and Other	10%	17%	0%	10%	11%	10%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 5. Crime Category of Inmate

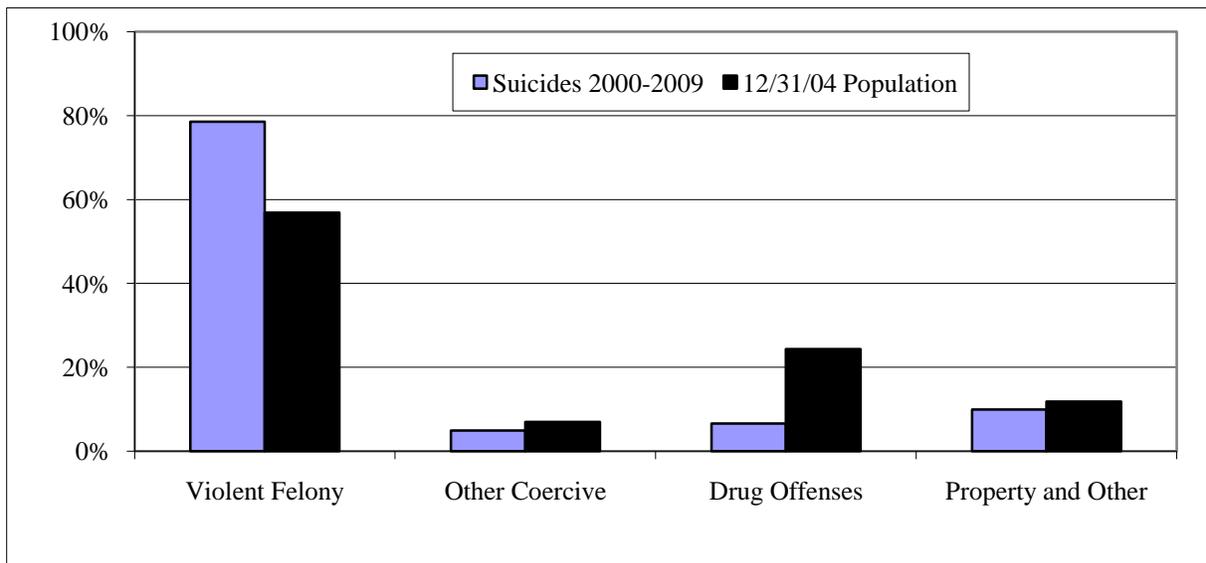
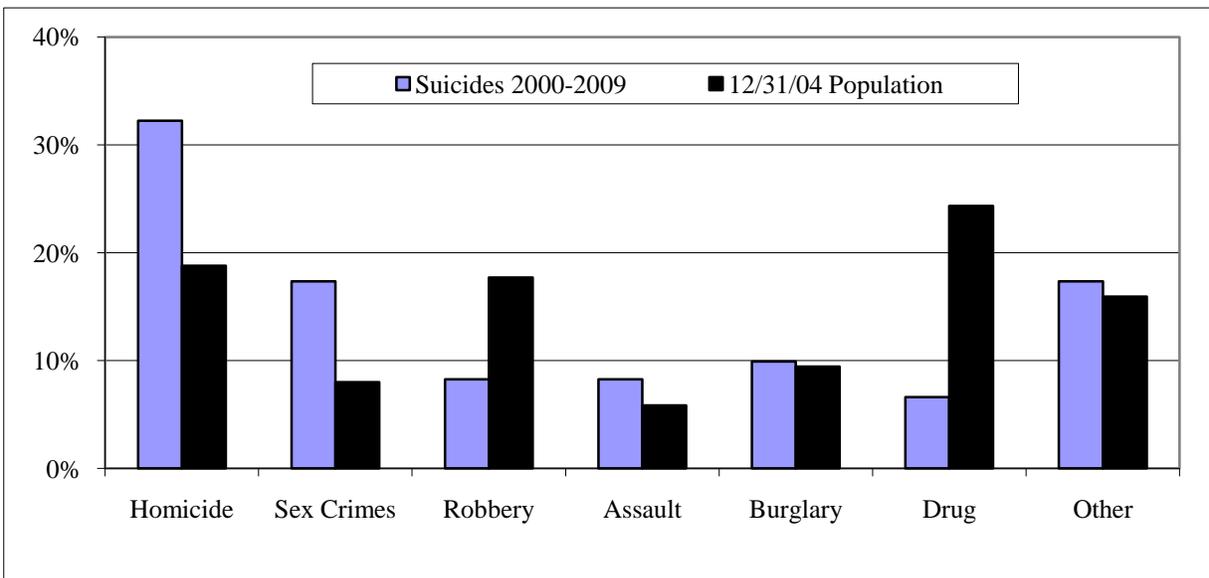


Table 6. Commitment Crime of Inmate by Year
 Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009

Crime	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total	12/31/04 Population
Homicide	27	4	5	3	12	39	11,966
Sex Crimes	12	3	3	3	9	21	5,088
Robbery	9	0	1	0	1	10	11,269
Assault	7	3	0	0	3	10	3,721
Burglary	9	2	1	0	3	12	6,020
Drug	7	0	0	1	1	8	15,491
Other	12	6	0	3	9	21	10,143
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,698
Percent							
Homicide	33%	22%	50%	30%	32%	32%	19%
Sex Crimes	14%	17%	30%	30%	24%	17%	8%
Robbery	11%	0%	10%	0%	3%	8%	18%
Assault	8%	17%	0%	0%	8%	8%	6%
Burglary	11%	11%	10%	0%	8%	10%	9%
Drug	8%	0%	0%	10%	3%	7%	24%
Other	14%	33%	0%	30%	24%	17%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 6. Commitment Crime of Inmate



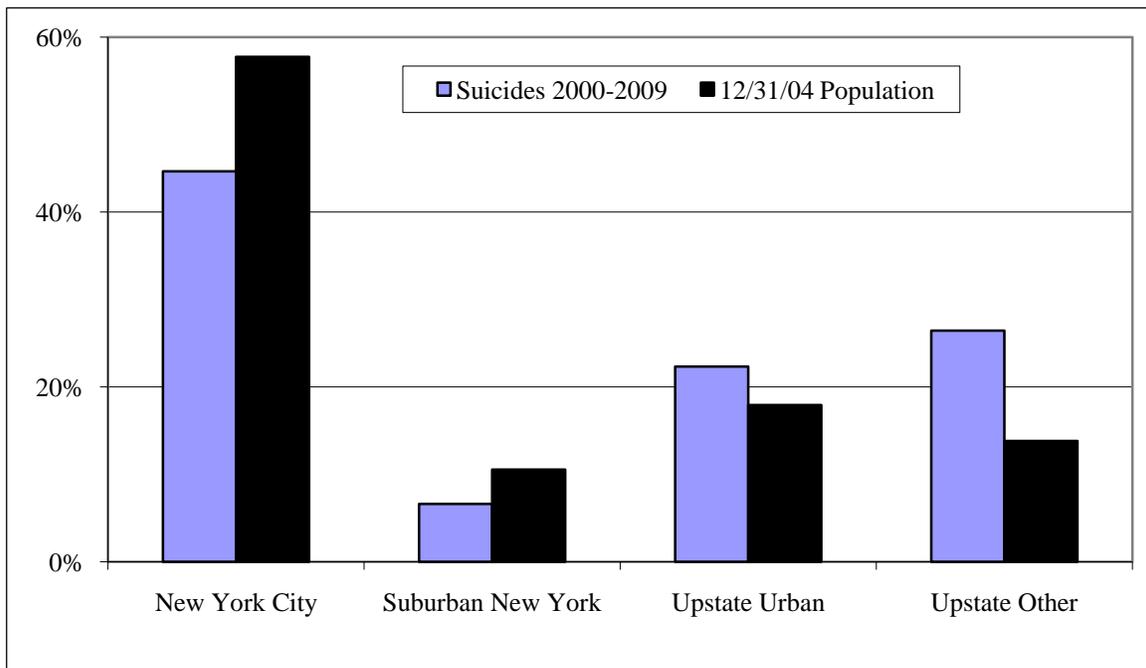
Region of the State

Inmates from the upstate counties, especially from counties without a population center of 50,000 or more people (“Upstate Other” category in Table 7), were more likely to commit suicide. Upstate inmates made up 48% of suicides during the study period, but only 32% of the under custody population at end of year 2004.

Table 7. Region of Commitment Crime of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009

Region	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total	12/31/04 Population
New York City	36	8	5	5	18	54	36,768
Suburban New York	5	2	0	1	3	8	6,705
Upstate Urban	20	4	1	2	7	27	11,426
Upstate Other	22	4	4	2	10	32	8,798
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,697
Percent							
New York City	43%	44%	50%	50%	47%	45%	58%
Suburban New York	6%	11%	0%	10%	8%	7%	11%
Upstate Urban	24%	22%	10%	20%	18%	22%	18%
Upstate Other	27%	22%	40%	20%	26%	26%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 7. Region of Commitment Crime



Aggregate Minimum and Maximum Sentences

The longer an inmate's sentence, the greater the probability that the inmate may be a suicide victim. Among inmates who committed suicide between 2000 and 2009, 43% were serving an aggregate minimum sentence of ten years or longer compared with only 28% of inmates under custody at end of year 2004. Among these suicides, 31% were serving maximum sentences of life, compared with 20% of the under custody population.

Table 8. Minimum Sentence of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009

Minimum Sentence	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total	12/31/04 Population
Less than 3 years	16	6	1	3	10	26	16,539
3 to 5 years	16	3	2	0	5	21	17,653
6 to 9 years	16	2	2	1	5	21	11,803
10 to 19 years	19	3	2	3	8	27	9,475
20 years or more	16	4	3	3	10	26	8,228
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,698
Percent							
Less than 3 years	19%	33%	10%	30%	26%	21%	26%
3 to 5 years	19%	17%	20%	0%	13%	17%	28%
6 to 9 years	19%	11%	20%	10%	13%	17%	19%
10 to 19 years	23%	17%	20%	30%	21%	22%	15%
20 years or more	19%	22%	30%	30%	26%	21%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 8. Minimum Sentence of Inmate

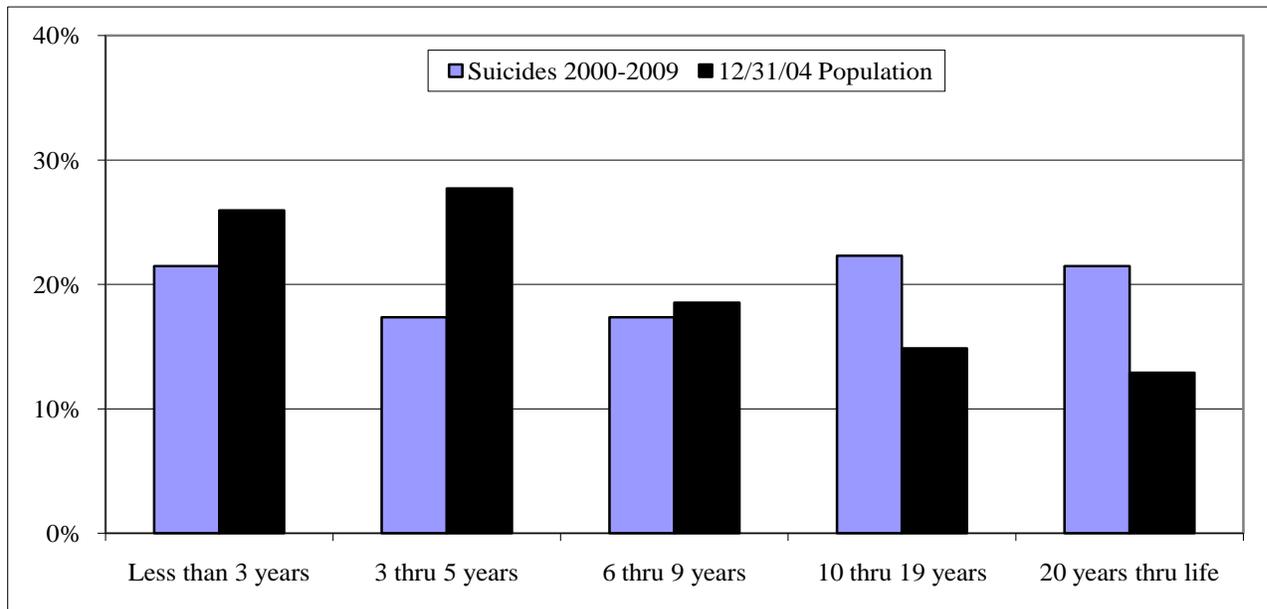
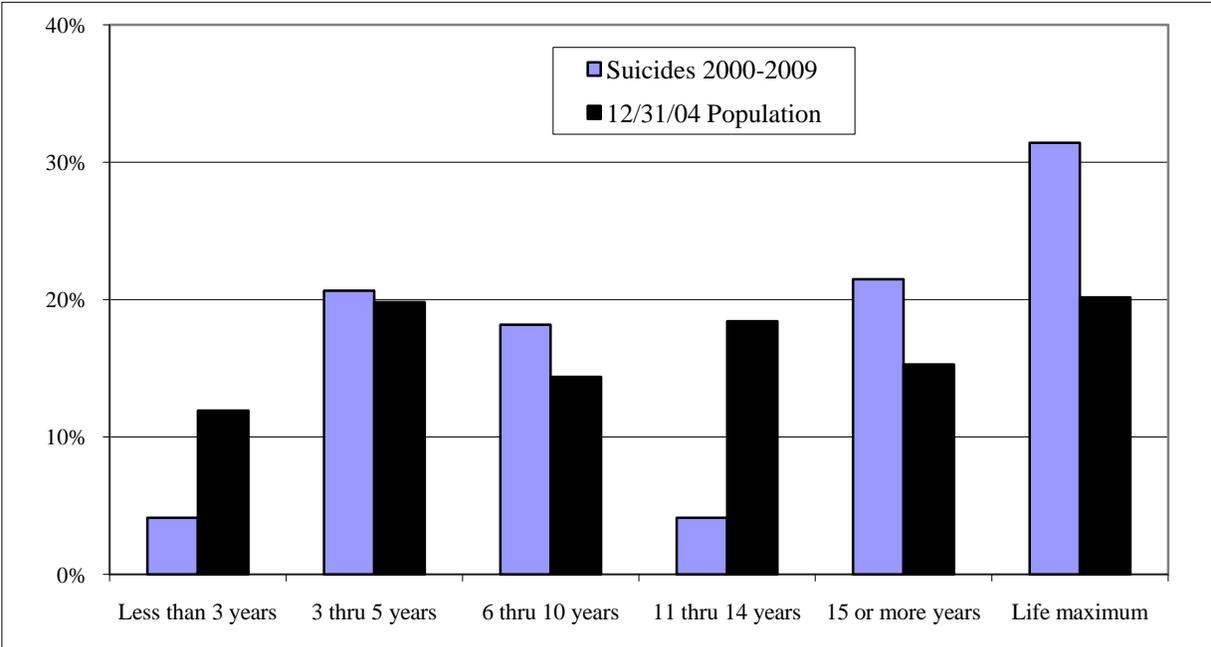


Table 9. Maximum Sentence of Inmate by Year
 Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009

Sentence Length	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total	12/31/04 Population
Less to 3 years	2	1	0	2	3	5	7,600
3 to 5 years	19	4	1	1	6	25	12,628
6 to 10 years	15	4	2	1	7	22	9,158
11 to 14 years	3	1	1	0	2	5	11,744
15 or more years	17	3	3	3	9	26	9,728
Life maximum	27	5	3	3	11	38	12,840
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,698
Percent							
Less than 3 years	2%	6%	0%	20%	8%	4%	12%
3 to 5 years	23%	22%	10%	10%	16%	21%	20%
6 to 10 years	18%	22%	20%	10%	18%	18%	14%
11 to 14 years	4%	6%	10%	0%	5%	4%	18%
15 or more years	20%	17%	30%	30%	24%	21%	15%
Life maximum	33%	28%	30%	30%	29%	31%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 9. Maximum Sentence of Inmate



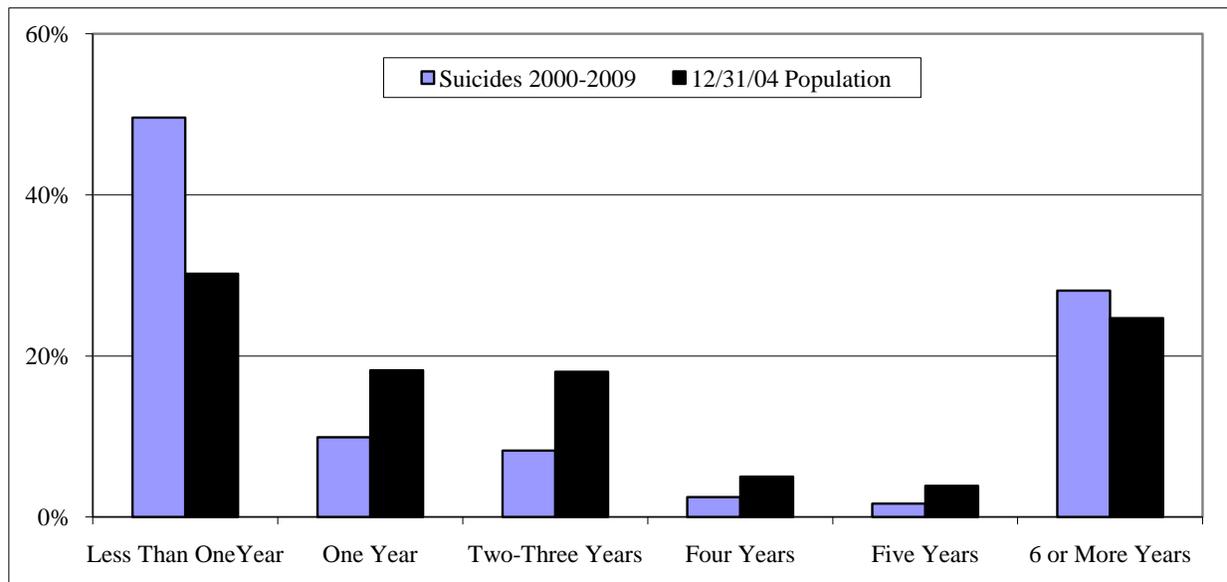
Time Served in DOCS Custody

With respect to time served in DOCS, suicides were particularly concentrated among inmates who had served less than a year in prison. Half of the suicides had served less than a year in prison as compared to 30% of the inmate population on December 31, 2004.

Table 10. Time Served in DOCS by Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009

Sentence Length	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total	12/31/04 Population
Less Than One Year	42	10	2	6	18	60	19,237
One Year	7	3	0	2	5	12	11,603
Two-Three Years	8	1	1	0	2	10	11,484
Four Years	2	0	0	1	1	3	3,194
Five Years	2	0	0	0	0	2	2,462
6 or More Years	22	4	7	1	12	34	15,718
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,698
Percent							
Less Than One Year	51%	56%	20%	60%	47%	50%	30%
One Year	8%	17%	0%	20%	13%	10%	18%
Two-Three Years	10%	6%	10%	0%	5%	8%	18%
Four Years	2%	0%	0%	10%	3%	2%	5%
Five Years	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	4%
6 or More Years	27%	22%	70%	10%	32%	28%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 10. Time Served in DOCS by Inmate at Time of Death



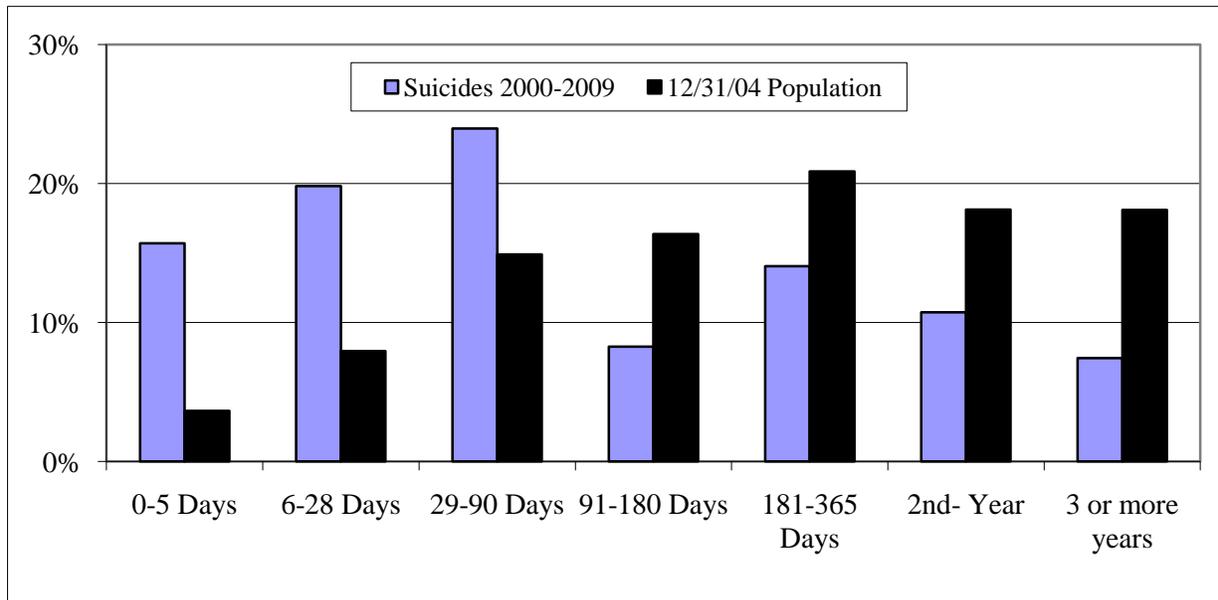
Time Served in Current Facility

Among suicide deaths, there was a substantially higher concentration of offenders who had recently transferred to a new correctional facility. Among suicides, 60% had been housed at their current facility for 90 days or less compared to 27% of the under custody population on 12/31/04.

**Table 11. Time Served in Facility by Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009**

Time Served in Facility	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total	12/31/04 Population
0-5 Days	14	1	0	4	5	19	2,322
6-28 Days	16	4	2	2	8	24	5,067
29-90 Days	19	3	5	2	10	29	9,491
91-180 Days	5	1	2	2	5	10	10,429
181-365 Days	15	2	0	0	2	17	13,296
2nd Year	9	4	0	0	4	13	11,554
3 or more years	5	3	1	0	4	9	11,527
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,686
Percent							
0-5 Days	17%	6%	0%	40%	13%	16%	4%
6-28 Days	19%	22%	20%	20%	21%	20%	8%
29-90 Days	23%	17%	50%	20%	26%	24%	15%
91-180 Days	6%	6%	20%	20%	13%	8%	16%
181-365 Days	18%	11%	0%	0%	5%	14%	21%
2nd- Year	11%	22%	0%	0%	11%	11%	18%
3 or more years	6%	17%	10%	0%	11%	7%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 11. Time Served in Facility by Inmate at Time of Death



Housing Location

The largest percentage of inmate suicides occurred in general population with 51 suicides (42%) during the study period. SHU (Special Housing Unit) had the next highest number of suicides, 33 or 27%. These units are cells where inmates serving time for disciplinary infractions are separated from general population inmates. Reception areas had 18 suicides (15%).

There were five suicides (4%) in ICP (Intermediate Care Program). The Intermediate Care Program is a residential mental health program jointly run by DOCS and OMH (Office of Mental Health). ICP provides services to inmates who have experienced difficulty coping in general population because of their psychiatric treatment history. There were three suicides (2%) in OMH-Residential Crisis Treatment Programs (RCTP). Office of Mental Health RCTP units have dorm beds and observation cells for inmates in crisis who need treatment.

Table 12. Housing Location for Suicides, 2000 - 2009

Housing Location	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total
Gen. Conf.	40	7	3	1	11	51
Keeplock	1	0	0	0	0	1
SHU	21	3	5	4	12	33
ICP	2	1	0	2	3	5
OMH-Satellite	2	1	0	0	1	3
Infirmery	4	1	0	0	1	5
Reception	11	4	1	2	7	18
Transit unit	2	0	0	0	0	2
Protective custody	0	1	1	1	3	3
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121
Percent						
Gen. Conf.	48%	39%	30%	10%	29%	42%
Keeplock	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
SHU	25%	17%	50%	40%	32%	27%
ICP	2%	6%	0%	20%	8%	4%
OMH-Satellite	2%	6%	0%	0%	3%	2%
Infirmery	5%	6%	0%	0%	3%	4%
Reception	13%	22%	10%	20%	18%	15%
Transit unit	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Protective custody	0%	6%	10%	10%	8%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

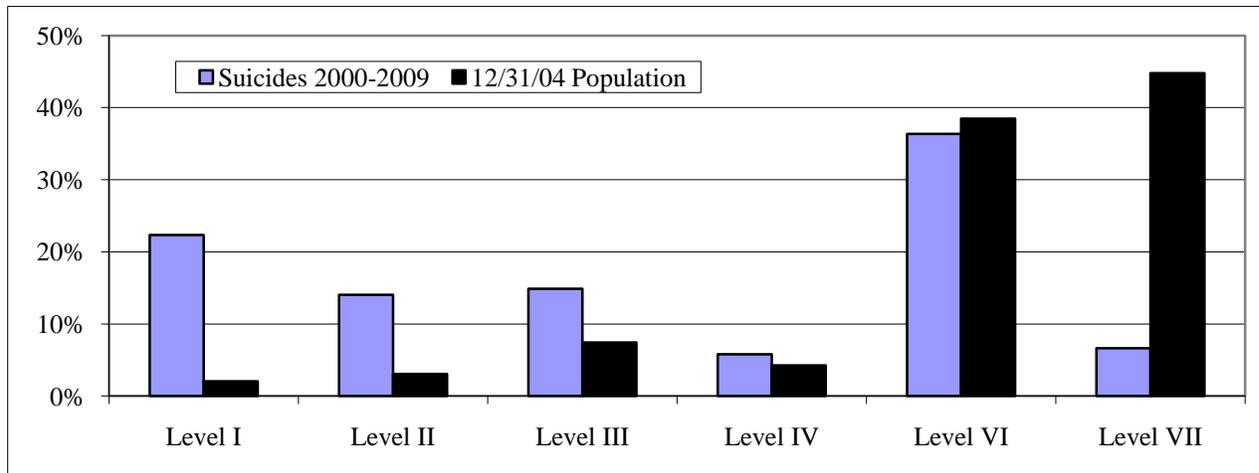
Mental Health Level

Suicide is more concentrated among inmates with a designated level of need for mental health services (Office of Mental Health Service Level or OMH Level). Thirty-six percent (36%) of suicide victims were designated as OMH Level 1 and 2 compared to 5% of the overall DOCS population at end of year 2004.

Table 13. OMH Level of Inmate by Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 2000 – 2009

OMH Level	Total 2000-2006	2007	2008	2009	Total 2007-2009	Grand Total	12/31/04 Population
Level I	20	3	1	3	7	27	1,285
Level II	13	4	0	0	4	17	1,938
Level III	11	2	3	2	7	18	4,705
Level IV	4	1	2	0	3	7	2,700
Level VI	31	6	3	4	13	44	24,462
Level VII	4	2	1	1	4	8	28,463
Total	83	18	10	10	38	121	63,553
Percent							
Level I	24%	17%	10%	30%	18%	22%	2%
Level II	16%	22%	0%	0%	11%	14%	3%
Level III	13%	11%	30%	20%	18%	15%	7%
Level IV	5%	6%	20%	0%	8%	6%	4%
Level VI	37%	33%	30%	40%	34%	36%	38%
Level VII	5%	11%	10%	10%	11%	7%	45%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 13. OMH Level of Inmate at Time of Death



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